

Introduction

Do you remember what you were doing on the November 4th, 2018? That is when we started this chapter! So I thought a brief review might be in order. In verses 1-11, Steve pointed out that the afterlife is not a new topic of discussion. When Paul first came to the Corinthian church he proclaimed the gospel which included the clear teaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In verses 12-19 Paul addresses those who are no longer holding to the truth of the resurrection. Paul points out that if Jesus was not raised then we all remain dead in our sins and are to be pitied for our beliefs. In verses 20-28 Paul then compared and contrasted our lives in Adam and in Christ. We all have death in Adam but life in Christ because He has defeated death.

In the next few verses Paul states that he and the other apostles are in constant danger for their teaching of Jesus resurrected. If the teaching about the resurrection was not true why would they risk their lives for a lie? Last week Steve led us through verses that taught us that we have a need for new bodies. Spiritual ones, glorified ones.

Today we are in the final verses of chapter 15. These are really the celebration verses of this chapter, of the teaching of this chapter.

I Corinthian 15:50-58

Division 1=The need for the new

50-53

Paul continues his teaching, in our verses today, that man in his natural form, our "flesh and blood", cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Our inheritance as children of God as co-heirs with Christ includes many things. Entrance into the Kingdom of God is a key one. It is the destiny of every believer, past present and future to enter into the kingdom of God but we

cannot enter into a spiritual realm with natural bodies. So believers must be changed.

The saying, “hind sight is twenty-twenty” applies to the word, “mystery”, as it is used by the New Testament writer’s. It is a word they used to indicate something that is no longer being concealed as it once was. When we look back at scripture with the fully revealed truth we see through the veiled and sometimes not so veiled references that address the resurrection and rapture. Paul continues to bring clarity to the events or order of the rapture and how it will unfold. A concern that some may have had was in regard to believers who are living at the time of the rapture. After all if I believe that Christ’s return was eminent, as many of them did, and I am alive what concerns might I have of my future. The truth Paul teaches them is that, “Not all Sleep”, and this indicates that there will be believers alive at the time of the rapture. Not every believer will experience death before Jesus returns and calls His children to be with Him. They to, even though they have not experienced death, will be changed from natural, perishable bodies to imperishable ones.

This change is not a gradual process it is an instantaneous one. The Greek word for moment in verse 52 is “atomos”, and it refers to the amount of time it will take to go from a physical body to a spiritual one. “Atomos”, is the smallest measurement possible. The time it takes to go from a physical being to a spiritual being is indivisibly small, you cannot get any smaller. Additionally, the phrase, “twinkling of an eye”, is the blinking or a rapid movement of the eye. The living believers will change to immortal bodies in a blink of an eye, in only fractions of a second, as they go from mortal to immortal.

Trumpets have often been used to signal events. Throughout the history of Israel God announced Himself with trumpets. In Roman times, soldiers would respond to two trumpet blasts. The first was to break camp and the second and last was to fall in line. This may have been what Paul had in mind in the second half of verse 52 when he states the “last trumpet”. God is calling all believers living and dead to fall in line, to meet up with God

with their changed bodies. This trumpet marks the end of our present existence and the beginning of our new existence, our future, an eternal existence with God. This transformation must take place so that we may inherit the kingdom of God but also to give us our final victory, our victory over death.

Division 2-The victory and theology

Verse 54-57

In verse 54 Paul shifts his teaching on the need for and the process of moving from perishable to imperishable to the results of this process. In verse 54 a key word is when. When we put on our imperishable, immortal bodies God signals an end to death's hold or reign on humanity.

The death of the natural body is an event that people must face. For those without God they may believe that it may be just the end to their existence. Others believe that it allows them to pass from this natural state into some other state. But no matter what one believes is on the other side of death's door, when they are honest it is a terrifying foe.

In 2012 Psychology Today describes death as one of the 5 fears that all people share. In a USA Today survey in 2016 it is a fear that is associated with a lack of control. No matter what your belief there are elements of uncertainty, of doubt that can affect everyone. You, usually, only get one shot at dying. So some fears or concerns are normal. They are part of our natural state. For the believer death is still our enemy, that is to say physical death is but it should not be something that brings terror.

As Paul points out, we know our future destiny. The loss and pain associated with death for believers is not to be denied. We are not exempt from the grief that naturally follows the death of someone we loved. But the joy for the believer who dies, the comfort is that death marks the beginning of the new life, an eternal life with God. It should be viewed as the doorway to the immortal life, a life to be lived in the presence of God in glory.

With this knowledge, the knowledge that death is defeated, Paul in verse 55, taunts death. Death is man's final enemy and Paul knowing his future and the future of all believers does a little trash talk. He calls out to death and questions it. Where is its victory and sting? The rhetorical answer is that death has none. Death no longer has victory, it no longer has any sting.

In verses 56 and 57 Paul gives us a short theological lesson on death and sin. I find it difficult to fully understand that this is not the creation God originally intended. When Adam sinned he changed everything. With his act of disobedience he brought death into the world. Our sin nature, on one hand, is something that we inherited from him. On the other hand we frequently prove that our sin nature is an active part of us with our actions, thoughts and attitudes. So death will touch us all because we all have sinned. Death is a result of our sin and without the work of Jesus Christ we would remain dead in our sins.

Sin is sin because the laws of God reveal our sin. The law was given as a thermometer. It was to let us know we are sick; that we do not meet the standards of God. It reveals we all miss the mark. But just a sin entered through one man, Adam, then repeated by all of us, victory was brought to us by one Man, Jesus. Jesus' perfect life defeated death. His resurrection proves this and God, by raising up and transforming believers, demonstrates, proves that Jesus defeated death for all who believe in Him. Therefore, death does not have the final victory in the life of a believer; believers will rise in victory over death. Paul ends verse 57 with praise to God for this victory through Jesus Christ.

Division 3-live with the end in mind

58

Paul brings chapter 15 to a close and gives us our application of the teaching in this chapter. This one verse is really the so what of this chapter, a chapter that began with the reminder of the teaching they originally received from Paul on the resurrection of Christ and how this

demonstrated that sin and death was defeated. He answered the questions or concerns about how our bodies would enter into a spiritual realm. Paul tells us how are we to live with the end in mind!

When preparing to teach I must admit the excitement I have as I work through a passage really lies in the process of investigation of the passage. The first step is to just read it, then you rewrite the verses pulling out the key words in each verse of that passage. For me this begins to elevate my enthusiasm for the passage. The next step is to cross reference some of those key words in the King James Version in order to look up their use and meaning in the Strong's exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. I personally find it amazing when the one word that God has chosen to use, to convey His meaning is used only in one verse or in a parallel passage. So imagine, if you can, the anticipation I had when I began this process on this last verse. Steadfast, immovable and abounding are three of the words that I worked through the process.

Steadfast in the King James Version is stedfast. It is only used two times in the Greek in this form. The meaning is we are to be sedentary or settled. At first glance I was not impressed. As I stopped and wrestled with the word and the concepts Paul had been teaching the translation began to come alive. The teaching of Jesus and His resurrection is being taught by those who have been eyewitnesses. Their very lives are at risk for this teaching. Therefore, I am to be settled on this truth of God when pressed by the culture around me. I am to be sedentary to the point I cannot be moved from the legal, historical event of the resurrection. Immoveable in the King James Version it is unmoveable. These two word linked together are a great picture of a person who will not and cannot be moved off the truth of scripture no matter the actions, attitudes of the culture around them. A major difference between any other world view and that of a believer in Jesus Christ is that our God, our savior is not to be found in any tomb or grave. He has risen and because of that, believers can stand firm on the truth of Scripture.

Application 1: Be Gracious but unmoveable in your belief in the resurrection and rapture.

My second application is based on the word abounding. The synonyms here are, Super abounding in quality and quantity, excess, abundance, more abundant, enough to spare, exceeding, over and above, excessive, beyond measure and my personal favorite, superfluous! I had to look that one up in the dictionary. How great is that. We are to be super abounding in quality and quantity, excess, abundance, more abundant, enough to spare, exceeding, over and above, excessive, beyond measure and superfluous in our work for God and we are to always be doing this! How convicting for me. I get tired of my commitments to the church, to God's people and to the non-believers around me. Clearly I am not in tune with God and His word. Does the word abounding, in light of the definition, describe your work for the Lord? Sadly, it does not describe me far too often.

Application 2: Abound in your work for God!

Lastly Paul encourages us by telling us our work; our labor for the Lord will not be in vain. Meaning it is not empty. When we work for God our lives and the lives of those around us will be blessed because of God's love, His grace and His truth.

Application 3: We are to know that our work is significant, it is valuable, and it is important.

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